

*Contact Jim Hubbard
(202) 225-2671*

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) – Congressman Russ Carnahan (D-MO) today voted for legislation that would help renovate and modernize public schools in Missouri and around the country.

By a vote of 250 to 164, the House passed the 21st Century Green High-Performing Public School Facilities Act (H.R. 3021), which provides funding to states and school districts to help ensure that school facilities and learning environments are safe, healthy, energy-efficient, environmentally friendly, and technologically advanced. The legislation includes more than \$102 million in funding for physical improvement projects for Missouri 's schools.

“It’s critically important that our students, teachers and staff have the best school environment possible,” said Carnahan. “Our schools should be examples of what can do when faced with serious challenges like global warming. This bill invests in new high performance and energy saving technologies that are a major part of rebuilding for future generations.”

According to recent estimates, public schools are hundreds of billions of dollars short of the funding needed to bring them into good condition.

While Congress provided \$1.2 billion in funding for emergency school repairs in 2001, and provided additional resources for schools devastated by Hurricane Katrina and Rita, the Bush administration has not provided direct funding for general school construction in any of its budgets over the last eight years. As a result, schools have been forced to rely mostly on state and local funding for any repair or renovation projects.

Overall, H.R. 3021 would authorize \$6.4 billion for school renovation and modernization projects for fiscal year 2009, and would ensure that school districts quickly receive funds for projects that improve schools’ teaching and learning climates, health and safety, and energy efficiency. To further encourage energy efficiency and the use of renewable resources in schools, the bill would require that the majority of funds for school improvement projects meet widely recognized green building standards and would provide states with funds to help schools track their facilities’ needs, energy use, and

carbon footprints, among other things.

Schools applying green building standards benefit the health of school children. The Environmental Protection Agency has cited instances around the country where visits to the nurses' office have decreased as well as the number of children seriously affected by asthma. As a result there has been a reduction in student absenteeism, which has been proven to increase student achievement.

St. Louis is ranked as the ninth most challenging place to live in the with asthma by the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America.

In addition, the legislation would bring immediate benefits to workers in the nation's construction industry – one of the sectors hit hardest by the recent economic downturn – and would ensure fair wages and benefits for workers by applying Davis-Bacon protections to all grants awarded for school improvement projects.

Earlier this week Congressman Carnahan and Congresswoman Judy Biggert (R-IL) announced the creation of the Congressional High Performance Buildings Caucus.

“Through a new and more sustainable approach to designing, constructing, and operating new buildings and retrofitting and operating older buildings, we can address

and reduce the numerous and varied environmental, climate, health, and economic impacts that result from our homes and buildings,” said Carnahan.

The Caucus will highlight solutions and concepts that encourage the building industry to plan, design, and maintain buildings that will provide the best present and future environmental, economic, and social benefits.